Cultural Continuity of the Indus Civilization in Border Regions of South Asia

A Transboundary Perspective

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Abstract

This article presents a transboundary study of regions in South Asia that, despite modern political divisions, remain culturally rooted in the legacy of the Indus Valley Civilization. Areas such as Kutch in Gujarat, the Thar Desert in Rajasthan, and Indian Punjab exhibit linguistic, social, and lifestyle affinities with Sindh and Pakistani Punjab. Drawing on historical geography, linguistic evidence, and cultural parallels, the study argues that these regions are part of a millennia-old civilizational continuum rather than recent political boundaries.

Introduction

The Indus Valley Civilization ranks among the world’s earliest urban cultures, extending beyond present-day Pakistan to include upper Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and the desert regions of Sindh (Possehl, 2002). Although the partition of 1947 redrew political borders, civilizational boundaries have remained intact.

Historical and Geographical Context

Regions such as Kutch, Tharparkar, Jaisalmer, Barmer, and Cholistan have long formed a contiguous desert ecosystem. Shared water sources, trade routes, nomadic tribes, and linguistic exchanges fostered deep cultural ties

across these areas (Mehta, 1999). Their geographical continuity played a vital role in sustaining the spread and resilience of Indus traditions.

Cultural and Linguistic Parallels

Kutch (Gujarat)

Kutch's embroidery, folk music, nomadic communities, the Kutchi language, and local customs closely resemble those of Sindh. The region's oral traditions and tribal networks mirror those of Sindh's Mir, Jogis, and Bugti communities (Boivin, 2014).

Thar (Rajasthan)

Barmer and Jaisalmer share cultural traits with Tharparkar and Cholistan, including attire, folk songs, turban styles, camel-based economies, and nomadic tribes. Musical forms such as "Panhal" and "Morli" resonate with Sindh's Sufi heritage (Frater, 2000).

Indian Punjab

Agricultural practices, festivals like Lohri and Baisakhi, dance forms such as Bhangra, and rural family structures in Indian Punjab show strong parallels with Pakistani Punjab. Languages like Punjabi, Saraiki, and Hindko further reinforce this continuity (Singh, 2011).

Civilization vs. Political Division

While state borders are administrative constructs, civilizational boundaries are shaped by centuries of shared experience, interaction, and collective memory. The cultural unity of the Indus region has not been dismantled by political partition; it has merely been administratively segmented (Gupta & Thapar, 2018).

Conclusion

Kutch, Thar, and Indian Punjab are not merely Indian territories—they are living examples of the enduring legacy of the Indus Civilization. Their

cultural ties with Sindh remain vibrant and perceptible. This study emphasizes the need to look beyond political maps and recognize the shared heritage that binds these regions.

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